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FM AMEMBASSY COTONOU
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0080
INFO RUEHZK/ECOWAS COLLECTIVE
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RHMFISS/COMUSNAVEUR NAPLES IT
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C O N F I D E N T I A L COTONOU 000001

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AF/W FOR BANKS, INL/AEE FOR STEFFENS, ACCRA FOR FORWOOD AND
VANG, NAVEUR FOR LCDR CNE-C6F DAVID MORALES, LAGOS FOR SAM
GAYE

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/02/2018

TAGS: [MCAP](#) [SNAR](#) [BN](#)

SUBJECT: BENIN'S NAVY PRESENTS NO DETERRENT TO ILLEGITIMATE
SEA TRAFFIC

REF: A. COTONOU 768

[1](#)B. COTONOU 648

[1](#)C. COTONOU 459

Classified By: Amb. Gayleatha B. Brown for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

1.(U) This is an action message. Please see paragraph 6.

2.(C) Benin's navy, an already precarious creation consisting of two old Chinese vessels and a collection of small motorboats, no longer presents any deterrent to those who illegally use Benin's coastal maritime space. Maxime Ahoyo, Benin's naval commander, told PolOff in a December 18 meeting that neither of the Navy's two Chinese donated vessels, which at their high point could only reach 10 knots per hour, can go to sea. According to Ahoyo the vessels break down "every" time the Beninese navy attempts to take them to sea and, even if the vessels could be made functional, the vessels do not move fast enough to interdict illegal traffic in Benin's waters.

3.(C) The lack of a functioning Navy hits Benin at a particularly hard time as the Navy's Automatic Identification System (AIS) recently became operational. The AIS, coupled with a radar in Cotonou, permits the Navy to identify illegitimate and legitimate maritime traffic from Benin's border with Nigeria in the east to a point half-way between Ouidah and Grand Popo in the west. While the Navy can now develop information regarding illegitimate incursions into Benin's waters, it lacks any capacity to interdict or inspect suspicious vessels.

4.(C) This lack of capacity is concerning, particularly in light of another piece of information Ahoyo shared with PolOff. According to Ahoyo, drug running vessels regularly disembark narcotics onto small jet scooters offshore near Ouidah for transport to drug smugglers waiting on land. Note. This is corroborated by the July 2007 capsizing of a boat carrying 360 kilograms of cocaine near Ouidah (Ref B). End Note. Ahoyo opined that with increased funding he could build a naval station near Ouidah with AIS and radar capabilities which would allow the navy to monitor the entirety of Benin's coastline and act as a deterrent to traffickers in the region.

5.(C) Comment: Benin lack of a functioning Navy makes its coast an opportune target for traffickers of narcotics and other goods who may be deterred by the navies of Benin's neighbors. Post will work with Ahoyo and the GOB to ensure that previously approved 1206 and Coastal Border Security

funds are well used to strengthen Benin's surveillance and defense capabilities.

6.(SBU) Action Requested: Post reiterates its request (Ref A and C) for 1.94 million dollars in additional 1206 funding to provide Benin with the vessels its Navy needs to secure its coastline and interdict illegal traffic.

BROWN